Driving and Using Cell Phones
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Cell phones and other hand-held electronic devices such as tablets and portable audio players play a central role in our society. According to the Pew Research Center, most U.S. adults own a cell phone. This has led to an increase in the number and frequency of people using their phones while driving – magnifying dangers on the road.

**Visual** distractions occur when drivers take their eyes off the road to dial, text, or read. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, sending or receiving a text takes a driver’s eyes from the road for about five seconds. At 55 miles per hour, this is equal to driving the length of an entire football field blind. In addition, drivers can become so absorbed in their conversations or their devices that the resulting **cognitive** distraction affects their brains’ ability to process what their eyes see. They become blind to things in their field of vision, even though their eyes are on the road. These conditions are unsafe for them and their passengers, pedestrians, and other drivers. Using a cell phone while driving, whether it is hand-held or hands-free, drastically lowers a driver’s focus and reaction time.

**Cell Phone Use Policy**

Employers should have an organizational policy in place for employees’ cell phone use while driving. (In this publication, “cell phone” includes other hand-held electronic devices.) The policy should:

- **Prohibit any cell phone use that violates federal, state, or local laws or that is otherwise unsafe.** In accordance with the Alex Brown Memorial Act (Texas House Bill 62), it is illegal to text and drive in Texas as of September 1, 2017.

- **Reflect the organization’s risk tolerance.** Some companies no longer provide employees cell phones and do not refund drivers for related expenses. Others allow or provide cell phones but limit how and when they may be used.

- **Reinforce regularly.** Include your organization’s cell phone use policy in an employee handbook and review it during new-employee orientation. Have employees sign an agreement form to obey its terms and conditions and explain the consequences of not doing so. Cover safe cell phone use in all employee driver-training programs and in reminders such as an employee newsletter.

- **Inform drivers.** Ensure that employees understand the reason for the cell phone use policy by explaining how it helps reduce the risk of crashes, serious or fatal injuries, and potential liability for the organization.

**Rules for employers to consider incorporating into an employee cell phone use policy:**

- Ban drivers’ use of cell phones while the vehicle is in motion, whether an employee is using a company-owned vehicle, a personal vehicle, or a phone supplied or required by the organization. Require that employees pull off the road and come to a complete stop before making or taking a call.

- Ban all texting while driving.

- State that the driver’s primary function is to drive the vehicle; a passenger or co-worker should handle any additional tasks, or the driver should stop the vehicle in a safe place before doing any task that may prevent safe operation of the vehicle.

- Train drivers to forward calls to voicemail while driving to avoid being distracted by an incoming call.

- State that employees who receive traffic violations resulting from cell phone use while driving are responsible for all penalties that result from such actions.

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**Sample Policy**

This sample cell phone and electronic device policy can be changed for your organization. Be sure to review related state and local laws to make sure your policy supports and does not conflict with them.

**Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy for Those Driving**

The use of cell phones and other hand-held electronic devices interferes with safe performance of driving tasks. (Company’s) policy is that no employees may use cell phones or other electronic devices while operating a motor vehicle for work. This includes employees who are frequent travelers and those who may drive incidentally. In emergency situations, employees should pull off the road in a safe and legal place to make or receive a call on a cell phone.

An employee who receives a traffic citation or is involved in an incident related to cell phone or electronic device use while operating a motor vehicle on the job must report it to his or her supervisor immediately or as soon as possible. An employee who is convicted of a traffic violation resulting from using a personal or work-issued cell phone or electronic device while operating a motor vehicle must report the conviction to his or her supervisor immediately and will be responsible for all penalties that result from such action.

As an employee, I understand that failure to comply with this policy could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

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Employee Acknowledgement

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Supervisor Acknowledgement

________________________
Date